

Westminster's Rental Housing License Program

Tenant Information

The City of Westminster's new Rental Housing License Program will help ensure that a tenant's home is in good shape inside and out.

Where there is a property maintenance problem – bad wall, ceiling, floor, roof, porch, garbage and debris, etc. – and the landlord is not responsive, the Rental Housing License Program provides the City with the ability to require the landlord to take care of the problem. If there are bad behavior problems – from nuisances to criminal activity – the Rental Housing License Program provides the City with extra ways to address these problems.

This program is complaint-based. Therefore, you must let the City know about the problem. To file a complaint, you may: 1) call the City's Rental Housing License Program office at 410-848-9000; 2) submit Client Service Request form on the City's homepage at www.westminstermd.gov under Online Services; or 3) send us a letter or drop by our offices at 56 W. Main Street (first floor), in Westminster.

In addition to getting problems corrected in your home, we will respond to complaints about problems in your apartment building, next door, in your neighborhood or anywhere else around town. Feel free to let the City's Code Enforcement Inspector know about the problem when your unit is inspected. The goal is to ensure a clean and safe home for you, plus better neighborhoods and a better Westminster for all of us.

Remember, tenants also have responsibilities. Keep your home clean, take care of the property, be a good neighbor and report problems. Don't be nervous about reporting issues to us. Your landlord can't evict you for letting us know about the issues.

If you are a Tenant:

- Tell the landlord first: give them a chance to take care of the problem.
- Report problems to the City: when you have a problem in your home and your landlord won't fix it, follow the reporting procedures outlined above to file a complaint. Call the Westminster City Police at 410-848-4646 for loud noise or illegal activity.
- Clean and sanitary conditions: every resident in the home needs to keep it clean and sanitary.
- Rubbish and garbage: store and dispose of rubbish and garbage in a clean and sanitary manner.
- Equipment and fixtures: take care of the stove, refrigerator, plumbing fixtures, etc.
- Animal behavior: keep your pets clean and be sure to clean up after your pets.
- Tenant behavior: be respectful, don't disturb the neighbors and don't let your guests disturb them.
- Nuisance behavior: don't be obnoxious – no loud noise, no drunken behavior or drinking outside, no public urination and related activities.

Please feel free to contact the City's Rental Housing License Program office at 410-848-9000. Additionally, you may also review Frequently Asked Questions about the Rental Licensing Program on the City's website at www.westminstermd.gov.

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Landlord Information

On January 28, 2013, the Mayor and Common Council of Westminster approved Ordinance No. 839 that created the City's Rental Housing License Program. Effective June 1, 2013, every residential rental unit must be licensed annually by the City of Westminster.

If you are a Landlord please take note of the following:

- Every rental unit must be licensed annually – single family, duplex, townhouse, apartment, condominium, rooming house, etc.
- The fee for the annual license is \$20 for each rental unit. Applications must be filed and received by the City by June 30, 2012. For applications received after that date, the license fee increases based on the length of the lateness. For the first year of the program, so long as the City receives a completed application with the required fees by July 31, 2013, the license fee is \$20 per unit.
- Information and the City's Rental Housing License Application will be mailed out to potential rental property owners during February 2013.
- Applications and Information are available from the City. You may stop by the City offices at 56 W. Main Street or call at 410-848-9000.
- Information is also available online. Go to the City's webpage at www.westminstermd.gov. General program information is available by clicking on "Rental Licensing Program" under "News and Events." Applications are available by clicking on "Online Services" and then "Forms and Applications." Under the section titled "Rental Licensing Program," the Rental Housing License Application and Continuation Sheet are available in a PDF-fillable format.
- Financial penalties are significant for non-compliance.
- Property owners may not rent or lease a residential rental unit to another person for occupancy unless the dwelling is licensed and meets basic clean, safe and sanitary standards.

With the annual license application, the landlord will be affirming that all residential rental units comply with the requirements of the City's Property Maintenance Code.

The Rental Housing License legislation creates a "Habitual Offender" designation. A "Habitual Offender" is a property owner with continuing violations resulting in the payment of three fines or three convictions within a 12 month period. Designation as a "Habitual Offender" will result in increased license fees and fines for property owners.

If the property owner of a residential rental property lives over 50 miles from Westminster, the property owner must designate a local agent residing within 50 miles of Westminster. The property owner must also keep the agent contact information current.

Effective June 1, 2013, landlords in Westminster will be impacted by the 2010 decision of the Maryland Court of Appeals in the case of *McDaniel vs. Baranowski* regarding summary ejectment (eviction). You are advised to consult your legal counsel for further information.

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